

green christian

the magazine

Earthed together
A Green Christian Way of Life
Where have all the prophets gone?

Green Christian

Published by Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link)

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Contributions should ideally be made by e-mail as attached files. Alternatively clear typescript is acceptable when negotiated with the editor. Accompanying photos and drawings are encouraged. An early phone call to the editor to indicate an intention to write is very helpful.

Editorial Policy

Green Christian is intended as a forum for Christians of all traditions to reflect on, and contribute to, current thinking and action in the Green Movement. The opinions expressed by guest authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors but are welcome for their sincerity and insight. Items mailed with *Green Christian* reflect the views of their authors or publishers and not necessarily those of Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link).

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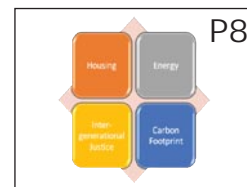
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GreenChristian

www.greenchristian.org.uk

Green Christian (formerly Christian Ecology Link) is an interdenominational UK Christian organisation for people concerned about the environment. It offers insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and Churches and offers Christian insights to the Green Movement.

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If you do not wish to be included, please notify the Membership Secretary.

Basis of Faith

We affirm our belief in God as Creator of all things and in Jesus Christ as Lord, looking to the Holy Spirit for guidance through the Scriptures, and seeking to hear Him in the challenges of the present time.

Patrons

Rt Rev James Jones, Fr Sean McDonagh, Sir Jonathon Porritt, Prof Sir Ghillelan Prance, Dr Elaine Storkey.

Green Christian is a registered trading name of Christian Ecology Link

Connections

My last *Green Christian* as editor

I 'retired' three years ago and experienced that cliché attached to the idea of retirement, yes, that's it, and I am busier than ever!

Well now, after 12 years, I feel it is time to retire from the editorship of *Green Christian*, the magazine, but most certainly not from the community of faith, resistance and hope (see the centre pages). As I bow out of this role I hope I will be forgiven for a self indulgence and including in an article of my own in my last issue (pages 10 and 11).

Connections

One of the most delightful and intriguing experiences has been seeing each issue grow into existence, well, we have to say, 'in an organic way'. Most of the articles and material for each issue just appear but what amazing connections there are. Look at Paul Ballard's article about the need for the Church to be prophetic (p.6) and Where have all the prophets gone? (p.10).

His phrase 'that we are gardeners, co-creators, in creation, then look at Earthed, Deborah Tompkin's encouragement for us to connect to nature by gardening and Laura Deacon's letter (p. 21): 'We are humble humans from the humus – adamah' and, further, Finding the Still Point (p.7) from The Quiet Garden Movement. The call for intergenerational justice (p. 8) introducing the fourth ecocell conference finds resonance with the poetry page (12).

The Local groups report (p.17) reminds me (p.10) not to disregard or be disrespectful to the local prophets described here, quietly and humbly doing the job in their context.

A Way of Life pp.14,15 longs to connect us together as a Green Christian Community.

Again the magazine is full of information, reports, conferences, stories and poems. Much of this is cerebral but we must be careful not to neglect a disciplined approach to strengthening our love and deep connection with creation, nature, the more than human community.

Our own connection with creation

Without this connection, this deep, intentional, intelligent emotional connection with the creator's gift we will struggle to follow in the steps of his Son who became one with the humble humus because he loved the creation so deeply.

After a time of solitude out in the woods here at Ringsfield a nine year old girl wrote: *In my Magic Spot I felt a bit lonely and frightened, but gradually I realised that I was not alone because nature was all around me and nature is my friend.*

Make sure you read Naoki Higashida's loving words (in the middle of column 2, p.10).

So as I say goodbye I pray that, whatever campaign you are involved with, whatever book you are reading, whatever conference you attend, you will be wrapped by nature, 'gently, glowing, swaying, bubbling, rustling'.

It isn't goodbye, I hope, but adieu. ■
Chris



CHRISTIAN ECOLOGY LINK HAS A NEW NAME: GREEN CHRISTIAN

In the last issue of *Green Christian* we reported on two important steps which it was felt would aid in CEL's ability to have a more immediate impact on people of all ages and which might also aid our development as a community of faith. Having consulted with members via the magazine and CELink, we are now in a position to report on the feedback and the outcome of the further prayerful reflection of CEL's steering committee.

NAME CHANGE

One step was a change of name from Christian Ecology Link to '**Green Christian**' which would signify a clear, bold and less confusing message for those (particularly young) people who have never heard of us (the second step, a new way of being is addressed on pp14-15).

There was almost unanimous support for changing our name to Green Christian, with several respondents feeling that this was long overdue. It was generally recognised that the new name would be more impacting.

After considering the responses and with further discussion, the steering committee endorsed the name change, as did the trustees. The operating name – with effect from 1st January 2015 will be – 'Green Christian'. 'Christian Ecology Link' will be retained as the formal name of the charity and the company.

As you are aware, this magazine and our website already bear the new name – and new copies of our literature will be changed over the coming months. ■

Green Christian is a registered trading name of Christian Ecology Link.

Enough is Enough

Paul Ballard means Enough in the sense of Stop!

Enough is enough

Today's topic is about 'enough'. This may sound odd until we look more closely to the demands being put on our planet by human economic and cultural activity. There are two images that I want to ask you to take away today. The first is the (perhaps familiar) fact that in order to support the present way of life we enjoy in Western Europe we need the resources of three planet earths. The Americans need four. And what we presently enjoy is the envy of the world; so they too strive to catch up. Look at the huge growing economies of Brazil, China and India. All this is remorselessly driven forward by the global market economy whose mantra is 'ever greater growth, more trade and greater consumption.'

Of course it is difficult to be unaware of what is going on. There are reports regularly from the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change of the United Nations, calling for radical diminution of the CO₂ emissions that cause global warming. We have begun to experience the consequent changes in weather patterns of monsoon conditions coupled with periods of drought, stronger storms and higher sea levels. However this is but one of a whole complex of environmental challenges, from deforestation to desertification, from loss of bio-diversity, to massive mineral exploitation and dead oceans. For me this is driven home by a photo taken from space of the world at night. The bright lights of the city regions are clear. But, fascinatingly, there are such lights in the desert of north-western Australia. These are mines stripping the earth. All this to supply the demands of an increasingly urbanised world. Only slowly and tentatively we are beginning to take this seriously, and the way ahead is unclear as we play around with technologies, try to

become more efficient and wrestle with the pitfalls of politics, with economic powers, and sheer inertia and nimbyism.

This is the context for the growing demand to call: 'Enough!'. Enough in the sense of, 'Stop! Before we fall over the precipice!'. Enough in the sense of only wanting to meet our needs and not to indulge our desires. Enough in the sense of using the planet's resources in a sustainable and responsible way that secures our future. This, however, requires a massive change in the way we order our lives. There is no future in tinkering around at the edges. It demands a shift in the way society understands itself, our relation to the world in which we are set, indeed, what it means to be human, inculcating different values, and seeking satisfaction in the quality of relationships, in beauty and creativity, rather than power and possessions. It seeks a new 'mind set'.

...the Church has to be prophetic witnessing to the seriousness and challenges of the times

It is here perhaps that the Christian community can make a significant contribution. There is a wisdom to be found in the Bible and the great theological teachers that can be, and increasingly are, called to witness, to illuminate and provide a richer understanding of humanity and its place in the creation. What I want to offer are four Christian themes as to how this may be so.

The time of opportunity

First, like John Bunyan's Pilgrim, we face a crucial choice: to continue to go down the road that leads to destruction



Wednesdays at One is a regular weekly series in Peterborough Cathedral, and the Eco-faith Group had a series of five around the annual Green Festival in the city.

They were entitled Creation, Enough is Enough, Justice and Ecology, and Responsibility with and for Nature and Christ the meaning of Creation.

or to take the uphill path to safety and responsibility. The Biblical term for this is *kairos*, the time of decision, the time that is ripe for change. The Old Testament prophets constantly called the people to change direction from greed and oppression to justice and peace.

Seek good and not evil,
That you may live;
And so the Lord, the God of Hosts
will be with you
Hate evil and love good,
And establish justice in the gate.
(Amos 5.14-15)

We have had our own *kairos*. For a moment it seemed, in the financial crisis, while the tents of Occupy crowded the steps of St Paul's and Wall Street was filled with protest, that something might give; but it was not to be so. Recovery, we are told, is more of the same, growth at any cost. And God sends many such *kairoi*, all offering a chance for change: each UN report or international conference, each natural disaster, each survey of species decline. Hopefully, cumulatively, the juggernaut that is our society is indeed being turned towards another course – if there is time. So

the first point is that the Church has to be prophetic, witnessing to the seriousness of the situation, pointing to the challenges of the times.

Tending the garden

The second point to make is that there is at the heart of the Christian perspective a responsibility to care for nature. The two creation narratives in Genesis set the scene. In the later and more ritualistic first account the man and woman (it is always together) are given 'dominion' over the natural world (Gen. 27-30) and encouraged to multiply. This has, unfortunately, too often been understood as a mandate for exploitation, but a careful reading suggests differently. To have 'dominion' means not to own but, on the contrary, to manage, to take responsibility for the world as God's vicegerent or viceroy. Thus humanity is given the task of seeing that the creation retains the goodness with which it is endowed by God, that it functions properly. The other command to 'fill the earth' made more sense when it was written, when even great empires covered large tracts of emptiness, cities were far and few between and the wilderness was all around. Yet it does not mean 'stuff full'. Rather it has the meaning of bringing to fullness, bring to full potential. So what we have here is the blessing of God on the creation, which itself is bidden to flourish, and where humanity is given responsibility to work with the creative process.

The second story, the myth of Eden, has a similar emphasis. Adam is taken, as his name suggests, from the ground and set with all the other creatures in a garden. There he has the responsibility of being the gardener (Gen. 2.15). Why else would he need an assistant? He exercises authority over the animals (this is the significance of naming them) (Gen. 2.19). Adam's need, however, is met by the presentation of a colleague, so that together they can make a working unit (Gen. 2.23-4). Nor is Adam made redundant after the fall. It is that the job gets more difficult (Gen. 3.17-18). The land and its inhabitants still have to be cared for if it is to bring forth its

fruits. Adam and Eve, humanity, are the gardeners, husbanding the resources of the earth.

In the Biblical narrative the theme continues. Noah, after the flood (Gen. 8.20-9.19), starts the process again, though now the horizons are the whole world. Above all, however, it is embedded in the Torah, in the commandments to care for the land and for the beasts, domestic and wild. There are commandments concerning the health of the land, caring for domestic beasts (eg Deut. 22.1f; 25.4), and even for the nests of the birds, which is as the justice and hospitality that extends to neighbour and stranger (Lev. 19.18). God himself cares for all the creatures. As our reading said:

You open your hand,
Satisfying the desire of every living thing.
(Psalm 145.16)

Remember, too, the Jesus sayings:

Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin but if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? (Matt. 6.26, 28, 30).

...the struggle towards restoration is a longing and yearning; a hope to which God himself is drawing us

The virtue of temperance

Thirdly, when I was a small boy, I remember my grandmother always refused a second helping by claiming she had had 'an elegant sufficiency'. In that phrase my Victorian Nonconformist grandmother was unwittingly putting her finger on a vital dimension of Christian moral teaching. Compared to her greedy grandson, she recognised that we only need enough.

In classical Christian terms we are talking about the virtue of temperance, by which is meant, not total abstinence but the ability to control the will to desire sufficiency. Drawing on a long tradition that goes back to the great ancient Greek philosophers, notably Aristotle, the cardinal virtues ask us to pick a middle way between excess and abstinence, here between inordinate self-denial and greed. A balanced life-style accepts the need to meet the necessary demands of living responsibly, caring for oneself, for the family and other dependents and in the community. For my grandmother this was, as we say, second nature, because she had learnt it from her youth. It was normal to live modestly and to treat others with care and respect. Perhaps growing up in a station master's tied house and being the village post-mistress, married to the baker, she could do little else. But it is still a virtue that an age of affluence, where we are encouraged to satisfy wants rather than needs, has been largely lost, even despised. The world is crying out for individuals and groups to embody the virtue of temperance, resisting our consumerist, growth society with courage and joy. It is, perhaps, here that the Christian tradition can most directly and creatively enter into the public square by enabling the rediscovery of that tradition of moral discourse that is part of our common cultural heritage.

Such a model for living clearly chimes in with the New Testament portrayal of the Christian life, both personally and communally. Indeed Paul's list of qualities that mark the fruit of the Spirit includes temperance (Gal. 5.23). Jesus again, in that same passage in the Sermon on the Mount, offers us, at the heart of our faith, the signature prayer that he taught his disciples. In it we ask, 'give us this day our daily bread'. The word used suggests the daily ration allowed for a soldier; that is, we ask for enough for the task of life and no more. He goes on, 'Your heavenly Father knows that you need these things. Strive for the kingdom of God

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

and his righteousness, and all these things (our daily necessities) will be given to you as well' (Matt. 6. 11, 33). Would that we could live by this wisdom!

Living in hope

The fourth point is this: the Apostle Paul has an astonishing passage in Romans 8, about the glory that is to be revealed (Rom. 8.10).

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of God.

It is not possible here to unpack all that

this might mean but one thing stands out. The future of creation, at least that bit in which we have been placed, as Paul sees it, looking back to Genesis, is bound up with, indeed is dependent on the future of mankind. Here we are brought back to the earlier point: that we are gardeners, co-creators, in creation. This is the core of that mind-set that is needed if we are to secure our future. But here that thought is related to the whole drama of creation and salvation. The vision is of a full restoration. In other words the struggle in which we are engaged is not simply an up-hill battle of attrition but an assertion of hope that this longing and yearning is to be true to the very grain of the universe, a hope to which God himself is drawing us. We are being encouraged here to get in line with our true nature and destiny.

It was suggested that there were two images that I want you to take away with you. The first was the destruction

of our greed. The second is found in the Apocalypse.

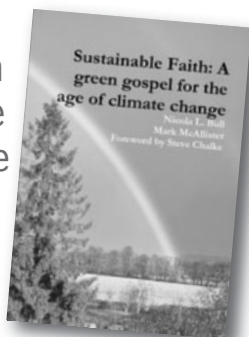
[He] showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God [and] he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing through the middle of the street. On either side of the river is the tree of life and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 21.10; 22.1-2).

Here again is that vision, of humanity, in the city, being healed by and living in harmony with the natural world. Let us keep that in our sights. ■

Paul Ballard is Professor Emeritus of Cardiff University in Practical Theology, now living in Peterborough. He is Secretary to the Peterborough Eco-faith Network which has been in existence for just two years.

Sustainable Faith: A green gospel for the age of climate change

By Nicola L. Bull and Mark McAllister
ISBN: 978-1-291-90020-0
£4.25



Foreword by Revd Steve Chalke. Bible-based, this book demonstrates that an important element of 21st-century Christian faith is about engaging with the big challenges of climate change and sustainable living.

A duty of loving care towards the planet and all its inhabitants should be a central feature of the Christian message in today's church, accompanied by scriptural backing and practical guidance, encouraging God's people to be at the forefront of change. Christians therefore need to be adequately equipped to bring a message of creation care and faith-based

environmentalism to their communities. Hospitality, love for our neighbours and care for the poor are central themes in the gospel message, and the 'green' gospel for today acknowledges that we cannot practise these fully and fulfil the mandate of Micah 6:8 – acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God – unless we demonstrate our love and care for all creation.

Humanity is part of a delicate web of life, all of which is loved by our Creator God.

Available from www.lulu.com

'To come even close to loving our neighbours in the way God intended, we have to face up to the colossal impact that we have on our planet and on their lives.'

Steve Chalke

In the last issue of *Green Christian*, GC77 we mentioned mention four of Mary Grey's books: the last mentioned is incorrect: we printed *The Advent of Peace* but advertised *The Resurrection of Peace*.

Here are the facts:
The Advent of Peace, SPCK 2010;
The Resurrection of Peace, SPCK 2012.

The Spirit of Peace forthcoming – I hope 2015 (or maybe December 2014).

The Editor apologises to Mary Grey and we wish her well in the publication of the new book.

Finding the Still Point

Mollie Robinson helps us gather fuel to discover the presence of God

As I sit with a blank sheet before me while I contemplate the contents of this article, it occurs to me that this is a visual aid for what I am about to write! The empty space, the blank sheet and the necessary open and attentive mind are all images of ways to find the still point in our lives, and the presence of God. I want to touch upon three areas: learning to be attentive, befriending silence, and learning to truly see.

There is much in today's society that militates against our giving full attention in reflective silence. Research indicates that heavy use of digital devices may be undermining our ability to concentrate with attention. We may be becoming better at moving through wide swathes of information, but there could well be an accompanying reduction in our capacity to think deeply and our ability to be attentive. Couple that with the fast pace of life and an incipient noisy environment and it is easy to lose the skill of being still and the ability of giving focussed attention, even to our family, let alone God!

Yet, we urgently need the space and silent moments to connect with our God. He spoke to Elijah in the still small voice, in the context of 'sheer silence', he spoke to Jesus in prayer on the mountaintops and in rugged places. Where do you find God speaks to you, or where do you most often hear his voice? Is it out in nature, or is it in a corner in your home, or even on the busy street? Perhaps it is appropriate to ask oneself, if God speaks, am I 'at home' to hear? Are both my heart and mind quiet enough, or sufficiently free from distraction, to actually listen?

There are various ways we can help ourselves to be attentive: cultivating quiet moments in the car, pausing while in the midst of a pressured assignment ... and valuing silence as not absence but presence, as the creative pause

between words or musical notes. We need silence to listen and to discern our path with wisdom, to learn to distinguish between what is helpful and what is unhelpful in our lives, both internally and externally.

Silence is a gift to be cultivated. It is the ground in which we hear the voice of God. Thomas Merton, priest and author, wrote, 'I do not demand light instead of darkness. I wait on the Word of God in silence and when I am "answered", it is not so much by a word that bursts into my silence, it is by my silence itself suddenly, inexplicably revealing itself to me as a word of great power, full of the voice of God.'

Merton, as with many other spiritual writers in the Christian tradition, thus links for us the notion of silence with the need for openness of heart and mind, not going into prayer anticipating certain answers or even specific guidance. This is the open-handed waiting of the Psalmist. 'In the depths of my being you are my God ... There may I look long and lovingly, there may I listen for the word beyond words, there may I wait for a glimpse of your glory' Psalm 63 (trans. Jim Cotter).

And as we learn to still ourselves to listen, and to open ourselves to the creator, so we learn also to see the world anew as someone has written 'with rinsed eyes'. We learn to contemplate and appreciate the intricate nature of each living creature, not passing it by, destroying it or negating its beauty. We are not 'hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past' ... but 'turning aside like Moses to the miracle of the lit bush ...' (R. S. Thomas).

As we slow our minds (and even our steps!) we discover the sacrament of the present moment and experience God mediating his presence through nature. We look with awe at the thunder clouds lined with hidden light, and gaze with delight at the tiny flower peeping through the concrete – how much can nature teach us!

The story is told of a young man who asked a monk why he sat alone on a cliff top and watched the sunset day after day. The old monk replied, 'I am gathering fuel, I am collecting material, so that tonight as I pray, I shall discover the presence of God in my own heart.' May our own hearts be so fuelled! ■

For 10 years until Autumn 2014, Mollie was the co-ordinator of The Quiet Garden Movement. In May the Quiet Garden Movement not only won a bronze medal, at the RHS Malvern Spring Festival but also the RHS People's Choice award.

Photo by Kristina Fitzsimmons, the designer



Bashing up our grandchildren?

Housing and energy: Fairness to all

Angus Hanton introduces the fourth ecocell conference

'We do not inherit the world from our parents – we borrow it from our children'.

Many people feel uncomfortable about the future that we are leaving to our grandchildren and they sense that the older generation is taking more than its fair share. They see that rising house prices have been a transfer of wealth from young to old and that instead of wealth cascading down the generations it is being pulled towards the old and away from younger people. In particular it often seems that the housing market is, in effect, rigged in favour of older people: housing gains are taxed very lightly and landlords, usually from the older generation, get a range of tax concessions on rental income. But the fundamental problem of shortage of housing supply is a result of the rationing of planning permissions to build which has created the current crisis in housing for younger people. This oppressive regime, it is argued, is further worsened by the tendency of many older people in the UK to remain in their family homes long after their families have grown up and left home, with the result that millions of unused bedrooms are being 'hoarded'. Also the widespread practice of having lodgers or live-in tenants using spare bedrooms has largely died away so that there are fewer rooms available for younger people to rent than there were in the past.

In UK energy there are only two issues which get into the news – 'lights out and high prices'. It is hard to get serious discussion going about UK energy policy – how we reduce our use and how we should source the energy that we use. But many people worry that we are producing our energy as cheaply and dirtily as possible, rather than in ways that leave our grandchildren with same the resources we had 50 years ago. We can choose to take action to influence public policy or in the personal choices we make, but where should we start?

Fairness to our children includes lots of other elements beyond housing and energy – we have built up a very large national debt for the next generation to pay off, or at least pay interest on. Furthermore we have arranged our pension system so that instead of putting real money aside to pay state and government pensions we have written promises to ourselves for our children and grandchildren to pay. Whilst we used to expect existing taxpayers to fund their education we now expect them to pay heavily for their own education – new schools are often financed with PFI (Private Finance Initiatives) where these will be paid for by future taxpayers, and university education is now paid by the students themselves who have to take on large debts which will usually mean them paying 9% of their income in interest and repayments for at least 30 years.

Housing and Energy Fairness for all?



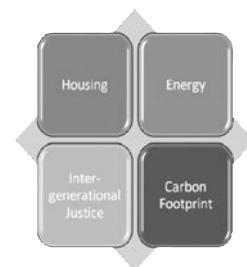
Saturday 24th January 2015

at St Alloysius, Euston, London 11am until 4.30pm

tony@christian-ecology.org.uk

See back cover

But why and how have we let things get so bad for our children and grandchildren? Have we been too focused on our own needs or have we, following the New Testament, been so concerned for the poor and needy of today that we have forgotten about the needs of younger and future generations, including their poor and needy? The Christian message has always put a lot of emphasis on the here and now: the early Church believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent and therefore little emphasis was put on long-term issues, which is perhaps ironic considering how effective the Church has been as a long term



institution. But Jesus was intensely concerned about social justice and many of the parables are about money and fairness; Jesus was also interested in thinking about beyond the here and now, encouraging us to think ahead to the Kingdom of Heaven and describing how money should be invested actively and wisely (as in the Parable of the Talents).

The two prongs of Christianity have always been faith and action (works). On the action side there are two routes to making a difference – how we behave personally and how we influence public policy. For both of these actions we need to get together in order to discuss our own behavioural change and to influence our government's policies.

Housing and Energy – Fairness for all?

The fourth annual ecocell workshop will address the issues of fairness to our grandchildren, especially in housing and energy. It will address the question: 'How can we put adequate roofs over all our heads without damaging the global "roof" that protects us from climate change?'

Contributors will include theologian Ann Morisy, Angus Hanton of the Intergenerational Foundation, and members of the Green Christian ecocell team: Barbara Echlin, George Dow and Tony Emerson. There will be plenty of time for discussion and an intergenerational game. ■

Angus Hanton is a Co-founder of the Intergenerational Foundation (IF) (www.if.org.uk), a think tank that focuses on intergenerational fairness in the UK. Angus has appeared on TV and radio to debate intergenerational fairness. He is an economist, businessman, and parent, who feels that we are not meeting our duty to safeguard the future for generations to come. For further information on IF contact liz@if.org.uk

Scientists for Global Responsibility

Sophie Hebden reports on technologies and simple lifestyles

'If you take this seriously you will not be driving home tonight, you will not be turning on your central heating before the temperature falls to 17 degrees, and you won't be taking foreign holidays.' Maria Sharmina, Manchester University, SGR conference 2014

On Saturday 4th October I joined members of the organisation Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) for their annual conference, 'Living within sustainable limits: from science to practice'. The organisation has a membership of about 900 natural scientists, social scientists, engineers, IT professionals and architects based in the UK, with roots in the campaign against nuclear arms. It has published a number of high profile reports on the UK's defence spending and more recently, a report on fracking. 'SGR steers a difficult line between campaigning and researching,' says Martin Bassant, a retired physics teacher who is on the SGR committee. 'As such it's quite unique.'

He thinks SGR's focus on sustainability and climate change is now eclipsing its original anti-nuclear focus, and as I discovered at the conference, many of its members are taking the science of climate change very seriously. Philip Webber, a physicist who chairs the SGR's committee, told me that he hasn't flown for 10 or 11 years, and has cut down significantly on his meat consumption. 'It's definitely made a difference in my life,' he says. 'It's not necessarily about the big changes – although we have recently had solar panels fitted. It's all the little choices: what you buy, whether you buy second-hand or not, I've made these changes because of the shocking reality of climate change.'

The conference's first speaker, Maria Sharmina from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of Manchester, made that shocking reality clear: emissions of greenhouse gases are continuing to rise

worldwide by 2-3% each year, and the most likely outcome, without a legally binding agreement by 2015, is that global temperatures will rise by 4-6 degrees by 2050.

'A 4-degree future should be avoided at all costs,' Sharmina told the meeting. 'It would be devastating, and incompatible with a stable global community. Maize and wheat yields near the equator would drop by 40%, and ecosystems would be wiped out. Scientists agree that this sort of temperature rise is beyond our adaptation capabilities, and is unlikely to be a stable – it could be a tipping point into even more rapid temperature rise.'



The main walkway through the Lancaster Co-housing Project

She went on to explain the problem of energy system 'lock-in', because of the design lifetime of technologies. If you build a coal-fired power station it operates for 30-50 years. Ships and planes have an approximately 30-year lifetime. 'The only thing we can work on right now is reducing energy demand,' Sharmina told the conference, 'and this has implications for everyone of us: if we take this seriously we won't be driving home tonight.'

Sharmina explained the enormous scaling-up effect that reducing demand has due to losses in the energy system, taking an 'A' grade fridge as an example. If you use 10 units of electricity keeping your food cool, the inefficiency of the appliance means it actually requires 50 units of electricity.

There are electricity transmission losses, and losses due to inefficiency at the power station: you

can't turn all the energy in your fuel into electricity. So to make your 10 units of electricity you need 130 units of fuel at the other end of the chain. There were a number of surprised comments from the audience on seeing how steeply any energy savings we can make scale-up.

Sharmina told the conference that the UK and other wealthy nations need to decarbonise by 70% over the next decade to make a fair contribution to cutting global emissions. Part of that solution is in stepping away from economic growth as a proxy for social 'goods'. 'Economic growth has no meaningful value,' she says. 'We need to escape the dogma of finance as the principle mechanism for delivering emissions cuts.'

Sue Riddlestone from the charity BioRegional described the 'One Planet Living' framework, which is based on the concept of a person's ecological footprint and the impact that our consumption has on the planet. Scientists at the Tyndall Centre have shown that if everyone on the globe has the same consumption levels as the average British person, we would need three planets to support us. The One Planet Living framework is a set of principles that helps focus efforts to reduce this impact down to a one planet-level, and is designed for use by community groups worldwide. For example, Sutton Council in London has achieved a 19% reduction in its ecological footprint over a 5-year period.

After a suitably vegan and vegetarian lunch, delegates discussed the practicalities of sustainable living and



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Where have all the prophets gone, long time passing?

Chris Walton asks 'When will we ever learn?'

At least the 'oldies' amongst us will remember Pete Seeger's lyrics sung also by Peter Paul and Mary, 'Where have all the flowers gone' in the 1960s. It has prompted me to ask 'Where have all the prophets gone, long time passing?'

Emasculated theology

In my first editorial (*GC52 Summer 2003*) I wrote 'God the Creator is using the crisis we have caused in his creation to draw his creatures back to the virtues and values of his Kingdom'. Now 12 years and 26 issues of *Green Christian* later while I believe those words with the same passion I have become more frustrated and more grieved that so many local Churches have not taken up this opportunity. In my view it is because of the spurious theology resounding in many local Churches. It is often an emasculated theology spawning a private faith and a passionless discipleship. On the one end of the spectrum, a doctrinaire evangelistic theology and proudly called *evangelical* by those who espouse it, which produces a faith about heavenly joy and detachment from the earth, and on the other an objective, discursive theology which clutches a progressive model of human development which it hides up its sleeve.

If only this caricature was just that. But over these last 12 years on behalf of *Green Christian* I have preached and spoken at many of both manifestations of Church where eco-theology is heard (or at least presented) as an after-thought or a one season, one Sunday event.

Of course there are exceptions and I must beware of hyperbole. But my experience is that even ecocongregations struggle to be characterised by an in-depth green theology.

Where have all the local prophets gone?

Green Christian (formerly known as *Christian Ecology Link*) has been at the fore front of the call to address the

environmental crisis in the UK. Operation Noah was being launched back in 2004, now a charity and movement in its own right; campaigns like LOAF and *ecocell* and now Joy in Enough continue to inspire and lead and provide resources. Over the years we have engaged with many other organisations and movements but, where have all the *local* prophets gone? Recently we have a much more cooperative and open relationship with A Rocha who it could be said reaches more deeply into the evangelical churches, while Green Christian (CEL) reaches more of the more liberal Churches. But what about the week by week, day by day preaching and teaching in the Churches?

We belong to the earth

Does it take the Buddhists to do the job, 'Significant change can happen when each of us decided to act for the greater good, when we have a shared sense of the world we inhabit'¹ or the occupational scientists, 'the process of collective change can begin with understanding how doing has the potential to connect to a sense of belonging'² or a child with autism, '...nature is always there at hand to wrap us up, gently, glowing, swaying, bubbling, rustling. Human beings are a part of the animal Kingdom too, and perhaps us people with autism still have some left-over awareness of this, buried somewhere deep down'³.

It is not that I do not gain inspiration from these people, but where are the Christian prophets/preachers passionately espousing that sense of belonging; being a part of creation, belonging to creation and so responsible for it. After all it is the Judeo-Christian tradition that affirms that God created all things; it is the Christian faith which robustly claims that Jesus, the Christ was with the creator at the beginning of all things.

A robust Christology

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him,



Chris preaching at a wedding!

and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (The Gospel According to John, 1:1-5, NRSV).

Christology surely is key for Christian disciples. Our faith is surely defined by our following the Christ, to be transformed into his likeness, to be and to do what he did and does.

In your minds you must be the same as Jesus Christ:

His state was divine,
yet he did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are; and being
as all men are, he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross.
(*Philippians 2.6-8, Jerusalem Bible*).

This puts a different take on the words of Jesus in John 14 v.12: 'Seriously, I'm telling you, those who believe in me will do as I do, and greater works, because I now go to the Father' (paraphrase, CW).

This isn't a promise of the possession of special miraculous gifts, but rather an indication of what radical discipleship really means: living and dying even, for others. That is, all others, people, plants, animals the whole teeming planet.

The downward way

The 'self-emptying' of the One who was in the beginning is known as the

'kenosis' of God, and is the key part of my understanding of a Christology which has motivated me to explore the disconnections of our society with the natural world (the creation) and understand Christian salvation as the means of reconnection.

The 'downward way' is a journey of passion. It is a journey of love and so a journey of suffering. In Christian terms Christ's passion (described in the Philippians passage above), that is the way of the cross, is the demonstration of God's love towards his world.

It is now the way for his disciples who, like him, suffer with and for others – compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish.

For the Christian disciple this desire is demonstrated in the passion of Christ, 'God so loved the cosmos that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life' (John 3:16). Or putting it another way: God so loved the world he became material, that is, embodied in all life. Here is an empathetic God who in an act of self-emptying, demonstrates his grieving heart and facilitates a way for all his creatures to belong again.

The 'downward way' goes even further than the *kenosis* of God in Christ.

'To be the very power of God yet to wait in frustration and hope until the whole be brought to fulfilment, might be called the kenosis, or self-emptying, of the Holy Spirit. For him it has been so from the beginning. If now we are caught up into his being, we must share his humiliation as well as his power⁴.

So we live in the Spirit, suffering with the Spirit. *Kenosis* is the soul's journey as Berry describes:

'We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources ... What is needed is not "transcendence" but "inscendence". This descent, this "inscendence", is the

journey of soul discovery, which can be engaged only by those who have moved beyond the early adolescence in which our society has stalled⁵.

'We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now: and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly as we await for adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies' (Romans 8:22-23).

We are disciples of the servant Lord

The posture of the 'downward way' of the incarnate God is a presence that is able to respond because it has listened to and for the 'other'; 'To see in this way is to grasp the invisible kinship and hidden solidarity among things, so see that matter is haunted by spirit and that spirit belongs to matter⁶ (Romanyshyn, 2002, p.167). This means that we, emptying ourselves, will experience the same oneness with all things. Conversion is to be understood as a series of *metanoias* (that word often translated as 'repentance' means a complete turn around, now going in a new direction).

The discipleship journey is a turn around, again and again, from living life as an upward flight to happiness full of riches, whether they be heavenly or earthly, to a downward journey towards the vocation of servanthood (Philippians uses the word 'slave') to the cosmos, the whole inhabited earth, the human and the more than human community. Or is it true that we have become hostage to our culture; so that we model our faith in the clothes of consumerism and militarism, instead of modelling a subversive culture on the sacred principle of love: the first shall be last and the last first. Properly interpreted that must mean if you are the crown of creation, then intentionally, you give up your life to be a servant to all including, the least of the least.

There should be no need for a separate ecotheology. Christian theology includes a theology of creation, just as it includes a theology of social justice and a theology of monetary justice. If the local prophets were doing their job they would be proclaiming a Christology which is

voiced in terms of a 'sacred cosmology where soul finds its home again in the order of creation'⁷.

The God-given opportunity

Am I deceiving myself to believe that if this robust proclamation of the gospel was being heard week by week in cathedrals, churches, chapels and house groups and in all the new expressions of Christian church, then we would no longer need to persuade, cajole and badger Christians into some sort of begrudging lip service to a green lifestyle. Instead faith in Christ would be immediately understood to be subversive of a culture which causes environmental mayhem. Such faith *sees* the destruction and *weeps* with Christ, then *acts* to follow a lifestyle which, disregarding upward mobility, serves and nurtures the whole inhabited earth. That would be a *storm of hope*.

Maybe an essential campaign for Green Christian (CEL) is to challenge the theological colleges to focus on strategies, not to make Church more modern and easily accessible but rather on a pedagogy which encourages and inspires the emergence of courageous local prophets to proclaim the Lord of the downward way.

Perhaps I was too optimistic in 2003. Perhaps my conviction should be rephrased: God the Creator is giving us the opportunity through the environmental crisis to lay down our lives, following the servant Lord, for all of his creation. But will we take that opportunity?

Where have all the local prophets gone, long time passing?

Oh when will we ever learn? ■

Chris is the retiring editor of *Green Christian*, the magazine. He was ordained in 1971 and after nearly 30 years in the Baptist ministry has spent the last 15 years with his wife Ross leading the Ringsfield EcoActivity and Retreat Centre known to many Green Christian (CEL) members.

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POETRY PLEASE

Ageing

A time of consolidation,
like moving house. Leaving,
giving, throwing out that which
is no longer needed.
Learning new dimensions;

how to fit oneself into unfamiliarity,
rooms, doorways, garden. All the while
aware that we shall not live here long.
Another fifty — thirty years is not
an option. Time span is reduced.

Don't waste it.
What should I leave behind?
What objects, what talents, what values
have I given or transmitted?

Then there are the practicalities
of a body getting dodderly.
Its limitations. Or ways
of compensating. Is there more to learn?
The needs of those about me.

Climate change – my role – the role
of everyone in living through it.
Awareness of new sciences,
gardening, food production.
Saving fuel and water.

Emerging hazards, new diseases
Emergency responses.
Flood wardens For instance
Solar energy Being there.

And God? The Sabbath 'rest'
and wholeness. Culmination.
Learning how to save the world
by holding it together

in stillness, one-ness. Not
in separation, conflict,
anxieties of right or wrong,
heaven or damnation;

but prayer as weaving
wholeness; ourselves a loom,
receptive to God's shuttle.

AR Parker

Beginning

I like how the sun shines
and the buds are all singing
and the flowers are blooming
and all nature is out.

Mark, 8 years old

I look and see some really amazing things.
A colourful ladybird and bugs with wings
I listen and hear the wonderful trees
Wisha wisha wisha they tease.
It sounds as if they are really enjoying themselves
And the fresh air makes me think of a new world.

Anonymous, a girl, 10 years old



Earthed: Loads of food from small spaces

Deborah Tomkins invites us to become Earthed together

Earthed is an invitation to those who wouldn't consider themselves gardeners — to consider how they might incorporate food-growing into their lives; and also to experienced gardeners, to consider how to encourage others to be involved. It differs from other projects in that as Christians we acknowledge the Creator, a spiritual dimension lacking in secular approaches.

Practical and sustainable gardening for all – low-cost, low-input, high-yielding



Deborah enjoying the products of the garden

In 26 years of marriage, we've lived in eight different places. That means eight gardens, two allotments, one orchard and one greenhouse. I've gardened in tiny backyards, and large half-acre plots; in deep damp shadow, and on the dry windswept top of the second highest hill in Suffolk (101 metres, if you're wondering); in clay, and on silt; in suburbia, in the countryside, and in the city. In all those places I've grown food, or at least attempted to – it's one of my passions – and I encourage others to do so too.

This article is not purely about my passion, nor will I talk much about sustainability, organic food, supply chains, waste, industrialisation, health, malnutrition, obesity, exploitation, factory farming, pollution, or even bees. You know about these things, and they've been discussed eloquently elsewhere. But these issues spring from one root: we in the West (i.e. the developed, privileged, wealthy, post-industrial, just-in-time supply-chained world) take food for granted. If we didn't, if we understood food to be the miraculous gift it truly is, we would take more care; we would in fact caretake more effectively than we do.

Taking food for granted means that in the UK we are complacent about importing around 40% of our food, and wasting 30%. As individuals we may find this horrifying, but as a society we barely consider it. Taking food for granted means that supermarkets provide umpteen varieties of cheese, biscuits, frozen puddings, oriental sauces... It means the appalling quality of institutional food... It means out-of-season produce – strawberries and cherry tomatoes at Christmas – and turning a blind eye to food miles and wastage alike... It means no understanding of how long vegetables take to mature (3-4 weeks for radishes; 9-12 months for broccoli)... It means no government emergency stocks – supermarkets are supposed to fulfil that role. I sometimes wonder what would happen if our supply chains broke down because of communications failure or fuel shortages or war.



Were they alive today my grandparents would be about 115. Born and brought up in London, they were Londoners all their lives. But they always grew food in their small back garden, as well as flowers, and my frail grandmother was still bottling apples in her old age; it would never have occurred to them to take food for granted. I think they were fairly typical of their generation.

Many people, Christians included, have an oddly negative attitude to food gardening: semi-apologetic shrugs of the shoulders, an implication that there are perhaps more important things to do. Many of us are *time-poor*, but there are other factors too. There is the *cult of the expert*, the idea that there is only one way to do things – this may lead to *fear of failure*. Many people are so disconnected from creation that they are *scared of or disgusted by* creepy-crawlies, mud, rain, and cold. Many believe that growing food is terribly *complicated* – all that crop rotation, all those timetables – or that you need a *big space*. Some think that veg beds are *ugly* and best kept out of sight. And the overflowing shelves of supermarkets lead us to be *complacent*. And yet I sense a movement of the Spirit, a renewed appreciation for the wonders of creation, a curiosity about where our food comes from, judging by the gardening and cookery programmes, books, and magazines. Because we all need to eat! Isn't growing food the most important job on the planet? Try thinking of another job that's actually more important – ask your children and grandchildren.

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Green Christian a resistance

George Dow introduces a



A NEW WAY OF BEING

So the first step is a new name and the second step is the introduction of a new way of belonging to Green Christian, formerly known as Christian Ecology Link.

Apart from those discussed within the steering committee, only a small number of comments were received – and all in favour of the Way of Life being offered as a voluntary option for members. To quote from one of the respondents, it would ‘help people who often feel isolated and unsupported and wondering what more they should do to have some more structure in their efforts and reflections’.

The **four disciplines of what we can now call a Green Christian Way of Life** which (building on the suggestions which were included in the GC Issue 77 article) will be:

- **Daily prayer and devotions**, eg by using our monthly prayer diary
- **Living gently on the earth**, by adopting our leaflet ‘Nine Ways to live gently on the Earth’ as an integral element, sharing and accounting for the use of our resources e.g. using ecocell
- **Public action**, with specific current and planned action for creation care through, perhaps, active involvement in local regional or national projects/campaigns
- **Accountability**, meeting with and accounting to each other, perhaps by adopting a Soul Friend or through CELink

In the last issue of *Green Christian* we reported on two important steps which it was felt would aid in CEL’s ability to have a more immediate impact on people of all ages and which might also aid our development as a community of faith. Having consulted with members via the magazine and CELink, we are now in a position to report on the feedback and the outcome of the further prayerful reflection of CEL’s steering committee. The first step, the name change, is reported on p.3.



A time of prayer
An exploration of a closer connection
Discussion about how the disciplines

You do not need to be committed to

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community of faith and hope

Green Christian Way of Life



prayer and reflection
connection to the earth, nature and creation
disciplines might be applied in our lives

to following the Way of Life to attend.

£120

Ringsfield Eco Activity Centre at Ringsfield Hall,
01502 713020 or email ringsfield-hall.co.uk
on greenchristian.org.uk

The Green Christian Gathering at Ringsfield Hall on 29 - 31 May 2015 will focus on the four disciplines by exploring the resources that we already offer and discovering how to use them in our Way of Life.

It will be a time of prayer and reflection, an exploration of a closer connection to the earth, nature and creation – and discussion about how the disciplines might be applied in our lives.

This will be very much an exploratory weekend and people do not need to be committed to following the Way of Life to attend.

Together we will consider how those who commit to the Way can support and be accountable to each other and how this initiative should be – for want of a better word, administered – to ensure that Way of Life participants can easily contact each other and be kept up to date with developments. ■



MOVING FORWARD

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback and thanks are extended to all CEL members and GC readers who held both of these topics in their prayers. Your support was much needed and has been keenly felt!

This is an exciting time for Green Christian (CEL). In the past we have given birth to many new initiatives and movements. With God's grace we will continue with our dreams and visions – and make a real difference with practical action and participating in a faith-led community.

It is hoped that our new name and a Way of Life will provide opportunities to enable us to move forward – and to encourage yet more people to join us on our journey.

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God placed Adam and Eve in a garden filled with good things to eat. Food is important; looking after the land is important; meals are important. These are not just spiritual symbolisms. The Creator of the Universe *earthed* himself in our planet, lived a lifetime of eating, drinking, walking, talking, studying, loving, laughing, weeping, watching, hearing, tasting, smelling, washing, even defecating. And did Jesus never grow vegetables in his family's garden?

My family's latest home is in central Bristol. Our town garden is about 40ft x 40ft. When we arrived in 2011 it was mostly concrete and overwhelmed by massive conifers, therefore extremely dry, dark, and sterile, with no insect life.

We ripped out the conifers, dug up the concrete, and in June 2013 built two eighteen-inch high raised beds, 9ft x 4ft, filling them with topsoil and bagged compost, at a total cost of about £180 (this includes labour). Inspired by an article in *Permaculture Magazine*, I liberally scattered all sorts of vegetable seeds into the beds, all at once, and also planted courgettes, tomatoes and beans. As in the wild, plants mature at different times (lettuces quicker than beetroot, for example), and are harvested when ready. In late summer the beds are dominated by the larger crops; beneath are small winter plants just waiting for the right time. Wildlife has come back to our garden: bees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths, ladybirds, lacewings, even frogs. And it's very pretty.

I kept a tally of my harvests: by September 2013 we'd paid off the initial outlay; by December we'd eaten about £500 of veg. We've eaten produce almost every day since July 2013, and sometimes we've had too much.

Raised beds have many advantages: no digging; everything visible and accessible (both weeds and crops); soil doesn't get compacted by being stood on; plants develop good root systems; no waterlogging; ease of watering. Close planting (or random sowing, in my case) means that weeds don't have a chance. Everything is edible. Tools are minimal. I have a rake, a hand trowel, and a watering can. My most useful

items are gloves, bean poles, string, and small secateurs (scissors would do just as well). I need to spend only about 10 minutes a day on my vegetables, and it's amazing to eat fantastic produce grown just five yards from my back door.

I'm sure you're keen to know what we've eaten! In varying quantities: lettuce, mustard, nasturtiums, sorrel, parsley, coriander leaf and seed, carrots, radicchio, chicory, rocket, radishes, spring onions, chives, chard, spinach, cress, watercress, marigolds, broad beans, runner beans, French beans, sugarsnap peas, tomatoes, cucumber, pumpkin, courgettes, peppers, chilli (in pot), cabbage, kale, beetroot, carrots, mouli. You can cook and eat the leaves and shoots of all beans, courgettes, pumpkins, peas, and also beetroot and carrot leaves. In late winter, to maintain soil fertility, I spread compost/manure on the soil surface – no digging.

There are inevitably losses or failures, due to weather or pests, and sometimes gluts, for the freezer or to give away, but this underlines how dependent we really are on Creation. It encourages us to be thankful, and to empathise with subsistence farmers who are absolutely dependent on their harvests. We become attuned to weather and seasons, and as we immerse ourselves in the Creative process we rediscover that we are part of Creation, not set apart.

This is low-cost gardening, with big returns, not just financial! This type of gardening busts the myths of time, money, expertise, dirt, tidiness, prettiness, and many others. It's not difficult to grow food; seeds just love to do what they do best – germinate, grow, and produce more seed. Children love to be involved. There are



community food-growing projects around the world involving the displaced and dispossessed – the homeless, refugees, former prisoners, troubled teenagers – which have a real impact on places and people. Growing food together brings people together in the way God intended. It's also been shown conclusively that small plots are more efficient than large farms in terms of volume and variety of crops grown, and the wildlife supported.

Can we Green Christians be earthed as Jesus was earthed? Is it part of our prophetic witness to joyfully grow food together, to passionately care for the Creation of which we are part, to watch with joy the miracle of life giving life to us? I believe it is. It's a challenge, perhaps, but more of an invitation – and if it's not possible for you, there should be no guilt.

Being **Earthed** can happen with anyone or in any place that seems feasible – with friends, family, Churches, schools, residential homes, community gardens. A Bristol parish Church is interested in starting a project in their vicarage garden. **Earthed** will have infinitely different outworkings, and this is good. Growing food is therapeutic and calming, leads to better relationships, saves money, is sustainable, healthy, and good for wildlife. As we consider **Joy in Enough**, let's become **Earthed** together. ■



Green Christian member ...Deborah Tomkins is committed to sharing Christian environmental witness within family, Church, and community. She is a keen gardener and writer, and is particularly interested in permaculture and environmental fiction.

A Local Lead?

Isobel Murdoch asks whether you might be inspired to act

Another six months, a new issue of *Green Christian*, the latest local group news and a call for you to consider whether you could play a part, however small, in this important aspect of Green Christian's mission. Several groups have recently closed. Eleven still persevere, scattered nationwide, but we need more new groups as well.

What is a local group?

Looking specifically at local groups, what comes to mind when you hear the expression 'local groups'? The truth is that local groups differ enormously and there are no specific demands at all. As one group leader commented recently, a group need only be an informal gathering in someone's house or church or hall, just an opportunity to talk and share or perhaps link with other local events or initiatives. A group needs no formal structure or set calendar. All a group needs is one person to set the ball rolling and see what happens. Could you be that person?

Perhaps some of the existing groups' news from the last six months will illustrate the flexibility of the Green Christian local group idea. In very different situations and settings, each group provides a link in their wider community to the Green Christian movement.

A variety of ways to be a group

Some work in an informal way, like **Andover**, with gatherings in members' houses or gardens and no official structure. Those who come share ideas and news about green issues over tea or a meal. The **Leighton Buzzard** group supports members as they work in their own Churches, although the group also organises some events. In **Reading** news emails circulated by the group leader hold the group together.

Perhaps your Church is, or could become, an Eco-congregation, or



Local Group meeting with Fr Tom Cullinan

perhaps you might like to green your Church in some way? The groups at All Saints Church in the Bedfordshire village of **Clifton** developed a wildlife-friendly churchyard plan several years ago, and working parties still maintain this. The local mayor presented **St Ives** Free Church (United Reformed) in Cambridgeshire with their second Eco-congregation award in August and the group will hold a LOAF meal during celebrations to mark 150 years since the church was built.

Or you might like to use some environmental resources with a prayer or Bible group, either using existing guides or producing a reflective resource of your own, as the Shrewsbury group leader has done. Or, like the **Milton Keynes** group with Dan O'Neill's *Enough is Enough*, you could screen a DVD.



Linking in with other local initiatives is also possible. **Cheltenham** local group members assisted with Cheltenham Green Doors, an open weekend of thirty local green houses and gardens.

Hereford's group leaders represented the group at a conference where Jonathon Porritt gave an inspiring and positive talk about his latest book. The **Milton Keynes** group leader will be going to Leipzig this autumn as part of the MK Leipzig Link church exchange. The theme of this year's exchange is *The Integrity of Creation and our response*. David is also active in Transition MK.

Were you to consider organising a talk or other event, you could hold this jointly with another group; for example, in November Milton Keynes' group will hold a talk on *Changing the Climate in the Church* with the MK Theology Forum. Other groups have held events with local Friends of the Earth or Tearfund supporters, or within One World Week or through Churches Together.

Groups may also run events of their own. **Clun's** latest Green Weekend took the theme of 'Need not Greed', supporting the charity Christians Against Poverty with a successful

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Freecycle morning. In the church on the Sunday Methodists and Anglicans heard readings on this theme, from Jesus clearing the temple courts to sharing in the early Church, and sang environment and justice related hymns. The weekend concluded with an outing to a 10-acre organic farm with rare breed sheep.

Cheltenham group still hold regular talks, recently hearing from Mary Colwell on John Muir and from a university lecturer on renewable energy. The **Hereford** group organised a talk about the Bulmer Foundation's sustainability work in the county.

Shrewsbury's EGG is organising a day conference at the Baptist Church on 22 November, with a keynote talk by Sam Berry, the retired Professor of Genetics whose recent book is *As Long As The Earth Endures: The Bible, Creation and the Environment*. This will be followed by a LOAF lunch and by workshops, with the whole day focusing on our Christian response.

Appropriately, some events take place outside. The **Hereford** group went to Devereux Wootton Farm for a trailer tour learning about the farm's biodiversity and energy work. The **Milton Keynes** group went to Wicken



Local Group meeting with Jonathon Porritt

Fen, Britain's oldest nature reserve, with rare plants and insects. The **Norwich** Diocesan Environment Group are exploring Forest Church (a 'fresh expression' of Church in the natural world) with one event held on Lopham Fen and one in Blickling Woods this summer.

A new idea – Local Contacts

Could you act as a kind of local contact for Green Christian, the organisation? This is a new idea I'm exploring which complements the groups.

While trying to form a local group might seem a commitment, acting as a contact might prove a way in, a way to experiment with what might be possible in your locality – in your village, town, city, church, benefice or Churches Together. Perhaps – but only perhaps –

as members of your congregation or other local Churches learn more about Green Christian, a group might develop.

As a contact you might want to distribute *Green Christian*, the magazine, or the Green Christian e-news. You might want to tell others about new Green Christian initiatives like *Joy in Enough*. When there are Green Christian members' letter campaigns (like the recent letter on tree diseases) or when another charity organises an environmental campaign, could you send a letter yourself and ask others in your Church or area to do so? Or could you hold a Green Christian stall at a local event?

Can you help?

Maybe something here, some aspect of the local groups' news, has inspired you? As you turn the page, perhaps you might consider whether you could either try to form a group or experiment with being a local contact for Green Christian, just to see what might happen. I feel that local presence, whether as a group or a contact, is central to Green Christian's impact. As I see it, the local Church is a place which embodies the hope of the world. If you would like to respond, I would be very glad to hear from you. ■

Busking for awareness

CEL members George Dow and Ruth Jarman, with her family and friends, played music and handed out CEL leaflets at the evangelical Christian festival, New Wine this year.

Although Dave Bookless from A Rocha spoke to a packed venue earlier in the week, George Dow, Ruth Jarman and their friends think that New Wine could say more about the earthing of our gospel and decided to do something about it.



People walking past were very happy to take *Storm of Hope* and *Nine Ways*, and we hope and pray that they will be challenged and inspired by what they read. ■

Storm of Hope <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/publications/storm-of-hope>

Nine ways to live gently of the Earth
<http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/leaflet/nine-ways.pdf>

Green Christian/CEL Events

In August 2014 CEL shared a stall with A Rocha at Greenbelt with both of our organisations emphasising the green part of being a disciple of Jesus. David Beard helped on the stall and wrote a report for our website in which he highlighted a seminar about Palm Oil hosted by Traidcraft, Michael Northcott's challenging talk, and a morning stroll with some folk from a Forest Church. During the communion service David, being a birder, noticed a stock dove slowly circling the congregation as they gathered, then perching on a gantry as they worshipped. He said it was as though the Holy Spirit was ensuring everything went in a way to glorify Father God.

As this issue of *Green Christian* goes out to members two events will have just happened, or be about to take place.

Joy in Enough Retreat

At the Noddfa Centre on the North Wales coast Mary Grey leads a weekend retreat for 40 participants on the 'Joy in Enough' theme. We will explore different ways of community – of journeying and resistance, as prophet and as mystic. On Sunday morning, weather permitting, Mary plans to take us on a journey to the Holy Mountain by climbing the 'mountain' slopes above Noddfa.

The Annual Members' Meeting is 2pm on Saturday 22 November at St Aloysius Church, Euston, London. Following the AMM Ian Christie of the Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group leads a workshop: **'Changing Lives'**. This will provide an exciting opportunity to engage with new findings from a 3-year programme of world-class research. The recently-completed Sustainable Lifestyles project has shed new light on what engages people in 'green' behaviour, individually and together. Funders included Defra, the Economic and Social Research Council & European Commission. Ian will present some of the lessons learnt, including those on community innovation and catalysts for personal action. We will explore what they mean for us as individuals, for the green movement, for Churches, and for our own action for a greener Church.

Climate Marches

In September the United Nations held a climate change summit in New York where UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on world leaders to make new proposals that would lead to a meaningful climate agreement at the big meeting in Paris in November 2015. 400,000 people marched through New York the day before the summit. CEL members took part in climate marches held at the same time around the UK: Poppy Pickard, Geoff and Sandie Stratford in London, Deborah Tomkins in Bristol, Ann Parker in Nottingham to name but a few.

A Celebration of Life



Sandra Dutson took part in the Manchester Climate Change March and Rally which focussed on the concerns about the threat of fracking for shale gas in the North West. The depth of concern in the area can be judged by the fact that there was a stream of speakers at the rally, all impassioned, and that the speeches continued for well over an hour with a large crowd still there listening. Sandra continues: 'September 23rd is also a kind of anniversary for me personally. 10 years ago I was waking up in hospital and facing the amputation that day of my left arm because of an unusual cancer. I had been prepared for several weeks that this was a possibility but this was confirmed by the surgeon only on the morning of the operation. The type of cancer involved does not respond well to chemotherapy and it most usually spreads to lungs and rapidly becomes fatal. So my choice was very starkly to lose my arm or lose my life. 10 years on I am very grateful I chose "life". It also seems to me there are parallels with the choice the world has to make in the face of climate change. If we go on hanging on to our dependence on fossil fuels then we will destroy the precious life this unique planet sustains. Outside the Friends Meeting House in Manchester the wayside thought that day read. "LIVE SIMPLY AND SIMPLY LIVE". My own experience is that what actually makes life so precious are often very simple things, the love and care of family and friends, and delights of sharing a walk in lovely surroundings or conversation over

a simple meal or drink. Losing fossil fuels may well feel like losing a limb, and we may wonder whether we can cope but in fact life – in all its fullness – can continue. I hope and pray our leaders do implant that message deep within their hearts so their minds can get to grips with the reality of what is needed in terms of action.'

Meeting of ECEN in Hungary

CEL member Martyn Goss attended the 10th Assembly of the European Christian Environment Network in Hungary in late September. There were representatives from Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions from 24 different countries meeting on the theme of 'Climate Change – the Churches' Response'. Nine people attended from countries within the British Isles. CEL patron, former Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, opened the Assembly with a call for all Christians to act ethically and locally from a global perspective. He said the gospel invites us to be actively involved in the 'earthing of heaven' – the living out of values of a living, loving God in the midst of Creation. You can read the rest of Martyn's report on our website.

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Join Now

If you wish to become a member of Green Christian (formerly known as Christian Ecology Link) or subscribe to *Green Christian the magazine only*, please fill in this form and send with your remittance to: CEL Membership, Richard and Nicky Kierton, Flat 1, 31 St James Terrace, Buxton SK17 6HS

Please tick:

- ☐ Standard Membership £30
- ☐ Concessionary Rate (low income) £12
- ☐ Joint/Family/Corporate £40
- ☐ *Green Christian* (the magazine only) £20
- ☐ Church Membership (recommended) £40

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____
(GC78)

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Hope for the Future

Have you written to your MP and other parliamentary candidates about their Party's Manifesto commitments on climate change? If not, then please do so. Ask them to say how they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 giving precise targets and dates. Hope for the Future campaigners would like to know about any responses you get: www.hfft.org.uk

CEL/Green Christian Timber letter campaign

Deforestation, and tree pests and diseases, may be attracting less news coverage in recent times, but the problems remain very real. CEL's letter campaign in early 2014 focused on the role played by the plant trade in introducing pests and diseases, asking garden centres to sell only UK-sourced and grown plants. For this new letter campaign the focus shifts to timber. We

are asking members to write a letter to their MPs. You can find the text of the letter on our website, or ask for a hard copy from our Information Officer.

New Members

Mary Colwell-Hector (Bristol)
Gillian Collins (Kent)
Robert Dimmick (Berks)
Markus Duenzkofer (Edinburgh)
Elaine Ewart (Cambs)
Carol Graves (London)
Delia Kennedy (Devon)
Sheila Mawaziny (Surrey)
Alison Mathew (London)
Julie McBarron (West Yorks)
Rod Macrorie (West Midlands)
Richard Morgan (Strathclyde)
Gillian Shaw (London)
Guy Sheppard (West Midlands)
Janice Timmins (Co. Durham)
Stella Westmacott (Cydwelli)
John Wilson (Oxon)
Nicola Wong (Derbyshire)

continued from page 9

visited the nearby, newly build cohousing project and community hydro-electric power station under construction. Stuart Parkinson, SGR executive director, highlighted the lifestyle changes that can be made to cut personal carbon emissions from the UK average of 12 tonnes to three tonnes per year. 'A few of us are doing this in the cohousing, and I want to say how nice it is!' he says. His low-carbon lifestyle has cut his emissions by 70%, and includes belonging to a car club (cheaper and no maintenance responsibilities); going on holiday by rail instead of flying (more fun and you see more of the countryside); eating fewer animal products (cheaper and healthier); and sharing large items like washing machines with neighbours (more sociable and cheaper).

The Lancaster Cohousing is 42 dwellings that are largely passively heated, with solar hot water and a small sustainable biomass heating system. Electricity is supplied from the photovoltaics and the hydro scheme is due to be completed in December. Jan Maskell, an occupational psychologist who lives at Lancaster Cohousing, let us look around her cosy house with its view over the River Lune. She thinks the biggest change to her lifestyle has been in cutting down the amount she drives, from 25,000 per year to 1,000. 'Living in the cohousing community has also had a big impact on my carbon footprint, and it is great in terms of the sense of belonging I get from living here,' she says. ■

Sophie Hebden is a freelance science writer and editor with a PhD in space physics, and worships at St Mark's Church in Mansfield. Her interests range from Palestine to quantum physics, which she writes about on her blog at sophiehebden.wordpress.com.

Peter Doodes announces his Fracking Blog

I have been concerned about the problems associated with Fracking in this country for nearly five years. I was saddened and shocked by the misinformation and lies that were being fed via the media by the three main political parties and by UKIP. Being in at the start of the anti-fracking movement meant that I was able to make contacts both UK and world wide, and be pointed at and linked to other concerned individuals and groups.

What I thought was missing was a 'one-stop-shop' where the verified facts about the potential environmental catastrophe that is Fracking could be presented in a non-technical way and then accessed and downloaded for others that are equally concerned.

I have been working on this and have produced this Blog to fill this gap. I am constantly updating it as new information becomes available.

Like many others reading this, I have been an environmentalist before the word was even in general use. I am an ordained C of E Minister, a Grandfather, a supporter of many environmental groups, have a smallholding and am, perhaps, one of the few ministers who is skilled at welding!

This is the link

<http://frackingfact.blogspot.co.uk/>



Green Christian member and outgoing *Green Christian* Editor, Chris Walton, invites you to

A Retreat in 2015

Jesus and Wild Nature: hearing his call to an eco-inclusive spirituality

Friday 6 – Sunday 8 February at Ringsfield EcoActivity Centre

with Noel Moules, Chris Walton and the Ringsfield education team

The weekend will explore scriptural roots to wilderness and spirituality, nurturing a Jesus-centred wild spirit. Noel Moules is a thinker, teacher and activist for peace, justice and deep ecology. He founded the Anvil Trust and Workshop, a learning programme in applied spirituality.

Chris Walton is Chair of the Ringsfield Hall Trust and Chaplain of Green Christian (formerly known as CEL)

For a booking form booking@ringsfield-hall.co.uk or tel. 01502 713020

What our readers have to say

Dear Editor

A Garden with a difference!

At the Malvern Spring Show in May this year award-winning garden designer, Angie Turner, teamed up with the Quiet Garden Trust to create an evocative and attractive garden specifically designed to foster spiritual refreshment by stilling the mind.

At the heart of the garden is a circular path delineated by cobbles set into gravel. Following the turning path, your mind is stilled and diverted from daily worries as attention focuses on the route to the centre. The path leads to a pond where the sound of water provides a focus and relaxes the mind, while a resting stone provides a place to stop and re-connect with the natural world.

The garden thus becomes a sanctuary, a place of rest and safety enclosed at the back by a wall with metal arches and tall planting. The planting scheme also reflects the movement towards stillness: the colours at the entrance to the garden are more vivid, while towards the centre of the garden they become calmer.

The Quiet Garden Trust (www.quietgarden.org), an international charity, is represented locally in Herefordshire and Worcestershire by several gardens whose owners are members of the charity. Some of them will be helping out at the Show Garden. Patrick Swan, gardener at Holland House, Pershore, has assisted Angie with the beautiful planting scheme of the garden.

The purpose of the Trust is to encourage the provision of local places of retreat and refreshment where for a few hours, people may find a place of peace and welcome in the beauty of the natural environment. Be it manicured or wild, nature has a proven ability to bring calm and perspective. Such places thus provide a much needed antidote to a noise-soaked and fast-paced world. It is increasingly being endorsed by scientific research that spending time in nature has substantial benefits for mental health, both for children and adults. The Show Garden has been re-assembled in a school in Buckinghamshire.

Quiet Gardens began in private homes, where the hosts generously made their homes and gardens available to others to come for a half or full day. The concept has since taken root as well in other more organisational settings, such as churches, schools and hospitals. There is endless variety and opportunity within the Quiet Garden Movement. The use of each garden area is often inspired by local needs. It can be the setting for creativity and renewal.

Mollie Robinson

(Green Christian and The Quiet Garden Trust have agreed to support one another: See also Finding the Still Point p.7. For further information see www.quietgarden.org – Editor)

Dear Editor

We are not going to get very far in our efforts to change the world unless we take part in politics as well as in our other activities.

The Green Party represents much of our aspirations, but I wonder how many Christians support it, or alternatives such as the environmental group in the Labour Party. Admittedly the Green Party doesn't have a Christian agenda, and when I wrote a letter to their magazine complaining about a letter in which the author labelled Christians as creationists working against the evidence of science, they did not publish my letter. But perhaps that's because there are so few Christians who have bothered to join the Green Party.

Christ called us to be like yeast. If enough Christians join the Green Party and make their opinions known we could do great things together.

Jenny Gibson

Dear Editor

I was sad to see that you are standing down as the Editor of *Green Christian, the magazine*. I will miss your editorials, and your insistence that 'following Jesus' is nothing less than a radical uprooting of our current consumer lifestyles – that applies to all Christians, not just Green ones. I hope that *Green Christian* continues to draw upon poetry and storytelling (I'm thinking of the New Universe Story in particular, but local Earth stories too) for inspiration.

I know that for me, it's always been a kind of theo-poetics (e.g. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grimm, Wendell Berry, Thomas Berry, Matthew Fox) that has captivated my attention rather than talk about economics. Visions and dreams. As Thomas Berry says, 'If a society's cultural world – the dreams that have guided it to a certain point – become dysfunctional, the society must go back and dream again'. Theological wisdom.

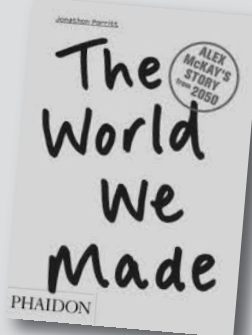
Can Christianity be converted to the Earth? I think so. We are humble

humans from the humus – adamah. Our, hymns, creeds, the Bible, contain much to inspire us to be faithful earth-keepers, if we look and listen. We need to re-dream the Bible, re-dream the meaning of Incarnation, Salvation, Redemption, Conversion, Creation, Grace, and so on, so that we know that our life with God and our life on earth are shared ventures, not separate ones.

Laura Deacon

The World We Made

by Jonathon Porritt
October 2013
Phaidon Press
ISBN 978-0-71486-361-0
320 pages
RRP £24.95



Environmentalists must ask themselves: why after 50 or so years of campaigning have we failed to get mass support? Of course there are powerful vested interests ranged against us. But perhaps it is also that for too long our gloom and doom rhetoric and sketching a future that sounded much like sackcloth and ashes was a turn-off for the great majority of people. And finally people could simply not envisage what a sustainable world would look like. Perhaps even environmentalists in their less optimistic moments secretly wondered: is it really possible?

This original, well researched, imaginative and brave (though at times slightly irritating) book by Jonathon

Porritt has tackled these dilemmas head on. It does so by imagining the world of a teacher in America (Alex McKay) who in 2050 carried out a research project with his students to describe what steps were taken to get to the world in 2050 which he describes as so much more stable and content than the world of 2022 (which he described as on the brink of collapse).

It does so in 50 chapters each one devoted to a topic for example water, food, biodiversity, climate challenges, solar revolutions, economics and finance, society and cities, travel etc. Any one of them would be a good starting point for learning about some of the cutting edge current and potential future technologies that may be well within our grasp to help us achieve our goal of a sustainable world. But it does not neglect the social, cultural, political and financial hurdles to be overcome.

In a chapter called 'Spiritual Militancy' he has Alex McKay stating that the contribution of the world's religions has been absolutely critical to achieving the more sustainable world.

He traces this back to the Assisi environmental statement of the five major world religions in 1986. He envisages a series of radical shifts in priorities and commitments by the religions which we can only hope and pray will come about.

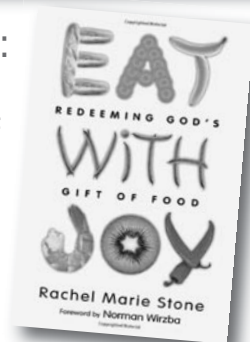
Jonathon Porritt in a postscript says that he is wary about offering a 'technotopia' as a panacea for all our ills, but the world he has conjured up for 2050 does in his view 'at least provide a vision of a future that doesn't entail the near-total collapse of everything we hold dear in our world today'. He says it has 'powerfully reinforced my belief that securing a genuinely sustainable world for about nine billion people by 2050 is still possible'. It has had the same impact on me.

This is a very thought provoking book which repays careful study. It would also be of real benefit to anyone faced with the naysayers who say 'yes all very well, but how can we get to the situation you greens suggest we need to get to'.

Mike Monaghan

Eat With Joy: Redeeming God's Gift of Food

by Rachel Marie Stone
February 2013
IVP Books
207 pages
ISBN 978-0-83083-658-1
£11.99 (paperback)



If you've never considered how food and eating relates to Christian life then this book will be a great starting point. If you have never thought much about what you eat, how it's produced, or what it means to eat together, this book will begin the process of understanding. Ultimately I suspect it will lead readers to tread more gently on the earth as they learn more about how the way they eat has consequences to all creation. Overall, Stone is both concerned to care for the planet and to relate this to what it means to eat as a Christian. Her distinctive approach to such caring is rooted in Scripture's teachings,

especially about creation and redemption. This exploration is ordered through looking at biblical perspectives in conversation with modern insights including farmers, nutritionists and counselors. Important to Stone in her dialogue with the Bible are contemporary Western questions such as: What food to buy? Why do I worry my body isn't like those so-called bodies on TV while others are starving or dying from malaria?

Stone's bringing to mind that food and eating are simple every-day activities is important in a climate where compassion fatigue can emotionally weigh us down. In focusing on food we may actually be able make changes that are consistent with caring for creation and being Christian. Stone will not make her readers feel guilty but empowered. In line with this there are lots of helpful and tested suggestions for action, with recipes, prayers before eating, questions for group discussion, and a bibliography for further study.

On a more negative note, Stone is emphasizing the aspect of joyful eating

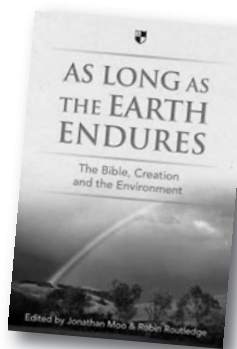
does appear at times to play down the fact that so many eat too much. For example she makes the statement: 'Not everyone who is obese is unhealthy...' (p.99). I can't imagine a medical doctor agreeing with her in the UK (Stone writes from a North American context). We eat too much in Western society and we could do well with thinking about the fact that Jesus assumes we will fast. The Bible is very strong on self-restraint and living within boundaries and limitations.

However, Stone's emphasis on 'eating joyfully' is a very important point. One could almost attribute to Stone 'I am because I eat joyfully'. God made us to be joyful and to be joyful is to live in the awareness that creation is God's free gift to us, and through food we are most intimate with non-human creation. If we eat mindfully in terms of the story behind our food, and in a sharing way, then we eat joyfully. If we eat unmindfully of the suffering our eating habits cause, then we insult God's gift by causing suffering to it, i.e. the environment, the sick, the starving, the oppressed.

Mark Bredin

As Long as the Earth Endures

Edited by Jonathan Moo and Robin Routledge
February 2014
Apollos (Inter-Varsity Press)
256 pages
RRP £17.99 (paperback)
ISBN 978-178359-038-4



This book will engage fruitfully for theologically-informed Christians who both look to the Bible as the definitive basis of their faith and who recognise the need to reflect seriously on contemporary ecological challenges. But others, like this reader, for whom experience and a response of wonder to it are the basis of faith, may feel more comfortable with this book when it addresses the empirical realities of our environment rather than when it delves deeply into detailed Scriptural exegesis.

Most of the chapters are revised versions of papers originally delivered at the Tyndale Fellowship Triennial Conference in 2012, which took the perspective 'that discussion begins with biblical and theological reflection and (then, perhaps) moves to its particular application in the "real world"' (p.31). Yet to be fair, and despite the rather definite origins of this book, it does actually display quite a healthy range of perspectives.

Alister McGrath sets a good tone in the opening chapter. We should begin, he says, by trying to see things as they are, which is as God sees them. But that means for us to start in trusting the Christian revelation, the 'compelling vision of reality'. My empiricist prejudice was troubled by that, but then more than reassured by McGrath's emphasis on how if we widen our vision to include its full comprehensiveness it forms a 'big picture' – which is exactly how I feel the Scriptures help me in my wondering at all we experience of this world. 'We need to be captivated by its comprehensiveness', he suggest, 'by its richness, by its capacity to make sense of things and to offer hope and transformation' (p.32f).

David Baker takes a close look at the first two chapters of Genesis and finds

there some strong reasons for our more conscious caring of creation (and, I was pleased to read, with suggestions of divine approval of a vegetarian diet if not an absolute insistence on it!). Robin Routledge continues examination of this part of the Bible, asking whether human original sin involved the whole of creation too. Jamie Grant and David Firth examine some psalms, Firth especially the psalms' understanding of God's Spirit, concluding that God's active presence is to be found in every aspect of the environment. Jonathan Moo moves on to discuss the biblical promise of this world's restoration, in contrast to the experience of its degradation, as the hopefulness which can be the distinctive Christian contribution to the environmental movement. Sean McDonough sees even in the destruction occasions for the hopefulness, as our learning of hard lessons, the holistic process of the world's continuing development, and the purging of various evils, all preparing for its ultimate transfiguration.

So we emerge from this rigorous theological ramble into what for me is the warmer sunlight of David Rainey's chapter drawing on the writings of Jurgen Moltmann. Moltmann's less propositional and more poetic theology encourages us to think of all existence as being in the God who is both its creator and sustainer, so that God is to be found participating in every aspect.

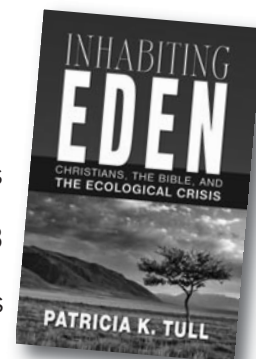
After Moltmann, Graham Watts' following chapter on the environmental implications of Colin Gunton's Trinitarian theology rather darkened the path again for me, to be honest. However let me assure you that the value of this book is made beautifully clear in the final chapter by Sam Berry, and in what was the sermon by I. Howard Marshall in the concluding worship at the Conference placed here as the Afterword. Berry summarises the history of Christian environmentalism, but warns that our commitment is often far more pragmatic than it should be, failing to engage as we might with stronger theological convictions: 'Creation care is not an optional extra for enthusiasts, but is inseparable from our calling as Christians.' (p.235) After all this I. Howard Marshall provides a sane and stabilising point of departure: 'the challenge to us to go on thinking, discussing and acting in this area of Christian living, to settle what are the

priorities, and to get on with doing the best we can here and now without waiting for complete solutions' (p.248). And isn't that our calling as Christians?

Andrew Norman CJN

Inhabiting Eden:

Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis
By Patricia Tull
November 2013
Westminster John Knox Press
ISBN 978-0-66423-333-4
204 pages
RRP £11.99 (paperback)



Patricia Tull has performed a useful service for the whole Church in the writing of this book. She has recently retired from being Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, and with formidable scholarship and originality she displays the relevance of Old Testament study to our current environmental predicament. Two quotations from the first chapter illustrate the purpose and direction of the book. 'There can be no change in action without changes in perception of who we are and to whom and what we owe allegiance'. 'If we remove some modern blinders we will find the Bible says a great deal more than we think about our ties with the rest of creation, ties we must now reclaim, ties that will not only lead us into restoring our surroundings, but into joys that consumer culture cannot offer'.

The book is ideally suited for a course of study; each chapter ends with questions for discussion but also suggestions for action springing out of the study under the title 'Try this at home'. It is eminently readable in a homely style and full of fresh insights and interpretations of the biblical text. One limitation is that it is primarily for the American market with all its illustrations and stories taken from the American scene, but that aspect of the book can be very useful for us this side of the pond in enabling us to understand more fully the environmental struggle in the United States.

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After an introductory chapter the next two chapters deal with the stories in the first four chapters in the book of Genesis – the wonder of creation seen through the eyes of the writers of Chapter 1, and then the Fall and the first murder. 'In two generations the fruitful covenant between humans and the earth is broken'. 'It is the quality of the soul that is at stake in Genesis 3 and again in Genesis 4. It is also the quality of the soil' (Genesis 4 vv 10 to 12). The chapter then quotes Hosea and Isaiah repeating that essential connection. Chapter 4 of the book – 'Commerce and Contentment' – follows the well trodden path about where true wealth lies but the familiar arguments are enhanced by appropriate biblical references and powerful ecological insights from around the world. Subsequent chapters raise questions about food (a challenging section about manna) and our relationship to animals quoting Genesis, Leviticus and Isaiah.

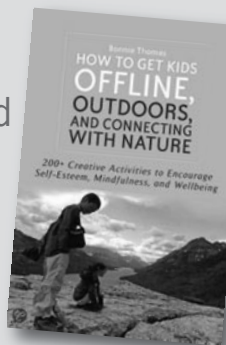
The book seems then to change gear and we are asked to wrestle with issues which require social, economic and scientific thinking. The chapter – 'Environmental Fairness' – invites the reader to struggle with the ecological effects of advanced industrialisation. 'Our Children's Inheritance' explores the effects of, and attitudes to, the rise in CO₂ and man-made climate change and the time scales involved. And finally we are given a vision (Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah) and a choice, and the chapter's title is 'Living within our Means'. The relevance of these chapters is challenging and immense.

Tull writes for the lay reader, or readers (lay theologically and scientifically), but her scholarship and breadth of vision emerge in the copious notes and the formidable bibliography. She is challenging groups to find fresh inspiration in Old Testament study, which can lead to practical environmental action. Her challenge presents a wonderful opportunity.

Canon Peter Dodd

How to Get Kids Offline, Outdoors and Connecting With Nature:

200+ creative activities to encourage self-esteem, mindfulness, and wellbeing by Bonnie Thomas
April 2014
Jessica Kingsley Publishers
269 pages
ISBN 978-1-849-05968-8
RRP £15.99 (paperback)



A friend of mine lives next to a village green where children played. These days he finds it quiet; he no longer hears them on the green. He comments, they're all at home behind computer screens. This book is about opening them, adults and children to the simple healing joys of nature.

This book is in two practical parts. The first is for mental health professionals and the second for children and their parents, but they are interrelated. Pages 93 and 94 sum up the values: kids love nature based activities... they understand the benefits of being in nature... they react positively to fresh air, green leaves, in the sun, near water (inland or beach)... a therapeutic experience that we are part of the earth and kids know this... nature is a place they can turn to when they need support and connection. The first five chapters cover 'Nature in Therapeutic Practice', 'Relaxation and Mindfulness', 'Self Esteem and Positive Connections', 'Nature Based Therapy and Grief Work' and 'Gardening for Wellbeing'.

The second half is about nature being fun. The whole text is touched with the simple pleasures to be found by

children exploring the outdoors; 'Drawing', 'Sand and Beach', 'Forest and Trees', 'Fields and Grassy Areas', 'Puddles and Mud', 'Rivers and Streams', 'Snow', and 'Bringing Nature Indoors'.

This is not a religious book, but invaluable for anyone seeking to develop an outdoor or even an indoor/outdoor 'messy Church'. It is full of simple ideas where children can play and learn that real life is not in a computer screen, but out there and in here among the trees, streams and a nature that gives, blesses and heals.

One of the advantages in using the ideas in the book is that the resources are freely available; paddling, sand, sticks, acorns, leaves and stones, and snow. Locations are equally open and free; green spaces, beaches, woods, fields and streams. What the author intends is that children will appreciate and have an empathy with nature and will interact with their natural environment.

This book is essentially practical, what children and their mentors can do and learn about creation. Such activities will encourage self-awareness in children about how they can safely play and learn in the great outdoors, well away from those screens and phones that tempt reliance on others' inventions and imagination. They will become healthier for it.

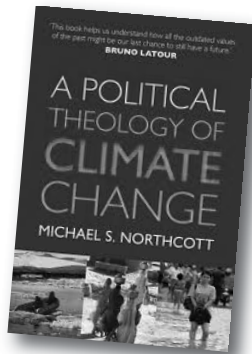
How to Get Kids Offline is clearly an American book, nowhere more obvious than in the section on snow. That does not detract from its message: kids need to be wild, they need to connect with nature. That is a message for our time for all of us. It is one we should teach to children, both as fun and as a therapy. This is a 'how to do it' manual.

John Smith, former chairman of the Cumbria Churches Environment Group

A Political Theology of Climate Change

by Michael S. Northcott
SPCK

April 2014
346 pages
ISBN 978-028107-232-3
RRP £19.99



The development of a science of climate change has proved to be divisive. In very general terms opposition to climate change comes from the political right-wing whilst support for it comes from the political left-wing. Because, on a worst case scenario, the probable effects of climate change are likely to be disastrous for our planet, there is an apocalyptic dimension to any political response. There is therefore a link from science, via politics, to theology. In this magisterial work, Professor Northcott seeks to explain why climate change science is divisive in the way that it is and how the interrelationship between a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, may be used to analyse what is happening and identify a possible way forward.

Professor Northcott moves confidently through philosophy, politics, history, theology and science, providing a much-needed overview of the complexities of the issues. This does not make for an easy read even though it is clearly written – but it is well-worth re-reading the more demanding sections in order to grasp the force of the thesis. Northcott wants to make that climate change exposes the greed, selfishness and exploitation that are the worst fruits of the Enlightenment, and which work for the interest of the few at the expense of the poor. From this Northcott then seeks to recover an interpretation of ‘Christianity’ that offers an imperative for the poor.

Northcott uses the somewhat controversial interpretation by Carl Schmitt of the Pauline idea of the *katechon* (from the Greek for ‘to hold down’) in 2 Thess 2.6-7, (itself a concept subject to a variety of understandings) as a structure in which to explain the ‘empire building’ right-

wing stance against climate change. Here Northcott risks entering a debate of labyrinthine complexity in order to establish his argument. I think he uses Schmitt’s political analysis in order to argue that the political consensus of the right is trying to preserve the imperium as the only effective bastion against the inevitability of the likely effects of climate change. Capitalism sees climate change as a threat to its essential assumptions that enlightened self-interest achieves the best for the common good; it therefore responds as a *katechon* – as a ‘restrainer’ (which will inevitably be futile) to prevent the resurgence of a renewed, post-enlightenment version of ‘Christianity’ which, paradoxically, would be the planet’s best hope for survival.

It may seem churlish to identify one or two omissions in such a comprehensive overview, but I felt that Professor Northcott underplays the contribution of the Green movement and makes no mention of the wide-ranging policies of the Green Party, particularly regarding a land tax. I also missed any mention of the so called Deep Ecologists such as Arne Næss, who believed that because governments always act selfishly, there was more hope for the planet if the religions co-operated together in identifying an ethic respecting nature and the inherent worth of other beings; and Satish Kumar who insists that reverence for nature should be at the heart of every political and social debate. To be fair Professor Northcott does include references to the Transition Towns movement and the work of Eco-Congregations.

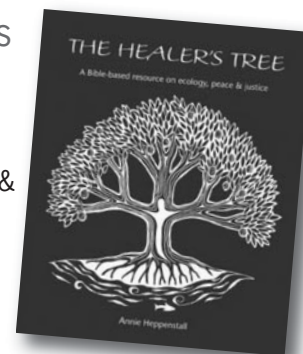
Professor Northcott’s thesis is directly relevant to the concerns currently being expressed in regard to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) a proposed free trade agreement between the European Union and the United States. Anyone seeking to understand and grasp the full implications of climate change and the responses it provokes will find much guidance and hope for the future in I. Michael Northcott’s immensely erudite and challenging book. I strongly recommend it but you will need to persevere to the end!

Donald C Macdonald

The Healer’s Tree:

A Bible-based resource on ecology, peace & justice,
by Annie Heppenstall

2011
Wild Goose Publications
ISBN 978-1-849-52077-5
160 pages
RRP £11.50 (paperback)



I’ve been a fan of Annie Heppenstall’s writing and liturgy since she first published ‘Reclaiming the Sealskin’ 10 years ago. Her writing continues to challenge and inspire in *The Healer’s Tree*.

Heppenstall offers a series of short, accessible reflections on images from nature in the Bible and Christian tradition in order to – as she puts it – trace ‘a path back’ to the ‘archetypal garden’ of Eden that is etched onto our hearts and calls us home to the created world that gave us birth. She does so with fascinating prose, prayer, and poetry and with stunning artwork.

From the vast wilderness to the olive stump, Annie Heppenstall draws us into her detailed meditation on even the microscopic process of life and as such reminds us of the holiness, aliveness, and union of all matter from otter to stone obelisk.

Throughout the book, Heppenstall cleverly and seamlessly draws together an ecological spirituality with the scriptures and traditions of the ancient and present Church to present a social and political ethic that has huge implications for the way we relate to one another and to nature: ‘Each grain is also a challenge, asking us whether we have fed the hungry, whether we have seen justice done, whether we have respected the earth’s abundance or stashed it out of the reach of those who cannot pay’ (page 55). Later in the book, her description of our inner animalistic nature, domesticated yet with potential to roam free in our imaginations, is exciting and intriguing – a good summary of much of the book, in fact.

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continued from page 25

Heppenstall gently makes a case for a vegan spirituality, arguing that to cause harm to animals is to fall out of relationship with other animals. For example, a mystic is surrounded by goats as she sits but when a goat-eater approaches they flee because they recognise the intruder as having eaten their kin. What Heppenstall doesn't do is explore whether animals fall out of relationship with each other by eating each other and whether we fall out of relationship with wheat whenever we eat

bread. I should add that I write this as a meat eater reading a vegan author and so we have our differing interpretive approaches on this issue!

Each chapter has a beautifully crafted prayer, exercises for reflection, and a closing thought. It's popular nowadays for authors to add some response or group material at the end of each chapter. But what Annie Heppenstall manages to do is to make these feel truly integral to the reading, rather than the add-on or after-thought they are in some books. In one of her 'Further

Reflection' bits, Heppenstall draws our attention to a much neglected but brilliant parable (Judges 9: 7-15) and asks simply 'What does the parable say to you about power and politics?'

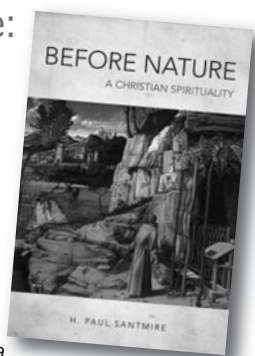
I enthusiastically recommend this book for Advent or Lent, for private retreat or group study. Without moralising or tubthumping, Heppenstall's book raises our expectations of ourselves and of what it is possible to know – experientially – of creation animated by the spirit of the divine.

Keith Hebden

Before Nature:

H. Paul Santmire offers a Christian Nature Spirituality

In his last book, a pioneering ecotheologian recommends nature spirituality based on praying a Trinity Prayer.



Santmire started to write about ecotheology already in the 1960s. His two first books, *Brother Earth* (1970) and *Travail of Nature* (1985) are internationally acclaimed classics. *Nature Reborn* (2000) has also been a widely read ecotheological work and the 2008 *Ritualizing Nature* was a pioneering work in connecting worship life with nature. Now he has reached the last stages of his long career – and ends with the most personal book he has written.

Before Nature: A Christian Spirituality (Fortress Press, 2014) could also be called 'The Confessions of an Ecotheologian', following St. Augustine. Santmire is bravely honest. He lets the reader to know the intimate details of his personal spiritual life. He offers to act as a spiritual guide, but wants to make sure that nobody thinks he is personally perfect. His confessions are touching and moving in their honesty. In his stories, experiences and places integrate with theological notions.

The method is extraordinary for a theological work of this kind. The book includes some heavy systematic theology, although Santmire has endeavoured to keep the most difficult

discussion in the end notes. However, the main flow of the text is based on stories about 'places of knowing' and 'roughly hewn analogies'. For example, discussion about God's presence in the natural world is linked with stories about Santmire's countryside house with its garden and environs; experience of God as self-sacrificing Saviour is described through the example of an anonymous black man who once saved Santmire's life; and awe before God's majesty is illustrated by contemplating the Niagara Falls.

This approach brings to the book a strong dimension of theology of places, mostly ordinary ones. The result is in an interesting contrast to most books about nature spirituality, which are usually linked with wilderness areas. To be sure, there is reflection about such places in Santmire's book, in addition with cosmological reflection, but for better or worse this is a book with urban and semi-urban context. I presume that this will help many readers who themselves live in such settings, even when a wilderness-oriented person might have wished for, to name an example, more discussion about God as 'powerful, torrential flow' (the Niagara analogy) in relation to nature's forces in the wild.

However, the most unique thing in the book is the way in which the content is integrated with Santmire's version of a Trinity Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Come, Holy Spirit, Come and Reign.

The chapters of the book are structured roughly in relation to these petitions. Santmire recommends a method where the prayer is said or sung many times a day, resulting in a spirituality of daily life. The book discusses numerous ecotheological themes, such as the travail of nature, the cosmic dimensions of Christ's work and the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to nature, and in the final chapter links this whole discussion with the Trinity Prayer.

The result is a highly interesting work, which will probably somewhat divide opinions, but it is difficult not to be moved by Santmire's honesty and effort. For those who have a theological background, the end notes offer much extra pondering. For my part, I wish that the book will lead new readers to become acquainted as well with Santmire's earlier, high-quality work, which includes also more concrete proposals related to conservation and environmental education.

Panu Pihkala

Rev. Pihkala is finishing his dissertation on ecotheology and is the chairperson of A Rocha Finland.

Praying the Truth to Power



Members of Christian Climate Change Action, both Grandads, kneel in prayer

Sometimes it's good to close your door and pray alone, away from the hustle and bustle of the world. But on September 22 2014, praying publically at a place of worldly power at a time of such historical significance felt wonderfully right.

That morning, as David Cameron flew to Ban Ki-Moon's Climate Summit in New York, the newly-formed Christian Climate Action group held its first event. We met for prayer. Not unusual for a Christian group, you might think. But our choice of situation meant that we blockaded Downing Street for half an hour, putting our bodies in the way of the normal operation of this seat of power, where normal operation scandalously ignores the plight of creation.

Ruth Jarman

Invitation

We come here today with, to bring, and to find, the peace and blessing of God the Farther, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

We also come with the blessing of David Cameron, who has encouraged us, as Christians, to be 'more confident', 'ambitious' to 'get out and make a difference', to 'improve our society' to 'educate' to 'infuse politics' with 'Christian ideals and values' such as 'responsibility ...compassion, humility and love'.

So we are here in the great Christian tradition. A tradition of those called to love their neighbour; to care for the least of them. We remember the prophets who were called to speak truth to power, to hold leaders to account. We remember the God-given responsibility that humanity are to be good stewards of God's good creation.

Confession

Creator God. We live in a world marked by profound injustice. The vast majority of our sisters and brothers on this earth live in poverty and misery, their human, social and political rights ignored, their dignity daily violated. This is not a consequence of fate or chance, but the result of human behaviour. It is the world we have made.

As Church, we have often been too afraid, too comfortable, too intimidated, too timid to name this sin of our world. Too often we as Church have been part of creating this injustice, either by commission or omission, and this has caused us to fail in our duty to be prophetic. We don't want to be made uncomfortable. We don't want to give up the privileged places we often hold in our world, for we, too, have sometimes benefited from injustice.

On this day we remember, particularly, the impoverished of this world, who do not cause climate change but are the first to feel and suffer the effects.

So we come in repentance of our neglect and betrayal of our gospel faith.

Prayer for the world

We pray for all who suffer from the initial adverse effects of climate change. Those, who through various means lose livelihoods and suffer bereavement of friends and relatives. Lord be their comfort and salvation.

We pray for all who campaign over the issues surrounding climate change: the prophets of this world. Give them courage, perseverance, vision of your coming kingdom. Let those to whom they speak look kindly on our global cause.

We pray for David Cameron and his government. May they have the humility, wisdom, courage, conviction, and integrity to hold to their manifesto promises and responsibilities to be the greenest government ever. That opposition MPs will be forthright in holding the government to these promises.

We pray for all world leaders. That they may hold, with compassion and love, the concerns of all the earth in their debates. That the good of all will be their primary concern, including the good of the future inheritors of this planet. May they be upright and courageous in resisting those who would seek to profit rather than solve the impending global environmental catastrophe.

Lord have mercy

This is a shortened version of the liturgy prepared and led by Rev. Daniel Woodhouse and Holly Petersen during the action at 10 Downing Street on 22 September 2014. The full version can be found on the website www.greenchristian.org.uk

(Confession adapted from *Prayers and Reflections for the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero*. He was assassinated 24th March 1980, during mass, after speaking out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations and torture.)

'Housing and Energy – Fairness for all?'

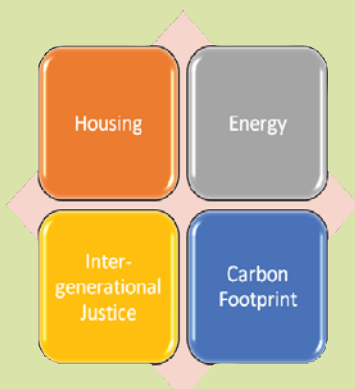
An ecocell workshop to ask: 'How can we put adequate roofs over all our heads without damaging the global "roof" that protects us from climate change?'



**St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1TA
(near Euston station)**

Saturday 24 January, 2015

11am to 4.30pm



Jointly organised by CEL/Green Christian and the Intergenerational Foundation. The workshop is open to all-comers interested in discussing these themes within an environmental and faith-based context. Speakers include Ann Morisy and Angus Hanton. More information on the Green Christian website.

Cost free – but donations on the day welcome.

Booking is essential as space is limited. Deadline for receiving bookings is 17th January 2015.

To book a place email tony@christian-ecology.org.uk

